

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 272346

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DRAFTED BY EA/VLC:MHENDERSON:JY

APPROVED BY EA:MR. HABIB

EA/TB:GROBERTS

PM/SAS:CAPT. MARRYOTT

EA/RA-PMU:MR. FINCH

DOD/OSD/ISA:LTC KING

L/PM:JMICHAEL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 272346

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, MILI, TH, LA, US

SUBJECT: DISPOSAL OF LAO MAP ASSETS IN THAILAND

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. BANGKOK 23076; B. BANGKOK 23719; C. BANGKOK 23273

1. IT HAS BEEN DECIDED TO ASSERT OUR REVERSIONARY RIGHTS
TO THE FORMER LAO AIRCRAFT AS WELL AS TO FUEL TRUCKS AND
OTHER RELATED EQUIPMENT NOW AT UDORN SUPPLIED TO LAOS
UNDER THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND TO PROCEED WITH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 272346

THE DISPOSITION OF THESE ASSETS TO OTHER MAP RECIPIENT

COUNTRIES.

2. OUR LEGAL POSITION IS THAT UNDER OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT WITH LAOS AS WELL AS WITH OTHER MAP RECIPIENT COUNTRIES, THE USG HAS THE RIGHT TO RETAIN TITLE TO ITEMS GRANTED UNDER SUCH AGREEMENTS WHEN THE EQUIPMENT CAN NO LONGER BE USED FOR THE PURPOSES INTENDED. IN THE CASE OF LAOS THIS IS NOW CLEARLY THE CASE.

3. FOR VIENTIANE: WE DO NOT PLAN TO INFORM THE LAO OF THIS DECISION BUT EXPECT THE PGNU TO REALIZE IN THE COURSE OF TIME WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE. IF AND WHEN THE SUBJECT IS RAISED YOU SHOULD REPLY TO ANY LAO QUERY BY STATING OUR LEGAL POSITION (SEE PARA 2 ABOVE) AND POINTING OUT TO THE LAO THAT THE SITUATION HAVING CHANGED UNDER THE 'NEW REALITIES' AS MUCH AS IT HAS, WE WERE LEFT WITH NO OTHER REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE.

4. FOR BANGKOK: YOU SHOULD APPROACH THE RTG AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL (PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT IF NECESSARY) WITH OUR DECISION AND ASK ITS COOPERATION OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCENCE IN THE DISPOSITION OF THESE AIRCRAFT AND OTHER EQUIPMENT. SHOULD ARGUMENTATION BE NEEDED WITH THE THAI, YOU SHOULD NOTE THAT EVEN THOUGH THE LAO ABILITY TO USE AND MAINTAIN THE AIRCRAFT MIGHT NOW BE ZERO, THERE IS A GROWING NUMBER OF SOVIET MILITARY TECHNICIANS IN LAOS WHO WOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY THROUGH CANNIBALIZATION IN PUTTING ENOUGH T-28S IN THE AIR, POSSIBLY TO THREATEN THE RTAF'S ABILITY TO OPERATE IN THE VICINITY OF THE THAI-LAO BORDER. YOU SHOULD POINT OUT THAT OUR GROWING PROBLEMS IN SECURING ADEQUATE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FUNDING FROM THE CONGRESS WOULD BE FURTHER COMPLICATED IF THE THAI WERE KNOWN TO BE PLANNING TO RETURN EQUIPMENT OVER OUR OBJECTIONS TO A COUNTRY PROHIBITED BY U.S. LAW FROM RECEIVING IT, AND SEEKING AT THE SAME TIME ADDITIONAL OR REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT FROM THE US. YOU COULD ALSO REFER TO THE FACT THAT SUCH A CONTEMPLATED ACTION WOULD HARDLY IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE OF CHATCHAI'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO ARRANGE.

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PAGE 03 STATE 272346

5. IT IS OUR INTENTION TO PROCEED AS RAPIDLY AS WE CAN WITH THE MOVEMENT OUT OF UDORN OF ALL REPOSSESSED LAO/MAP AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT AS SOON AS RTG HAS BEEN INFORMED, PROVIDED RTG INTERPOSES NO OVERRIDING OBJECTION. FYI: IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, OUR INTEREST IN THE CONTINUATION OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE RTG AND IN ACCESS TO BASES IN THAILAND OVERRIDE ANY MILITARY VALUE ASSOCIATED

WITH THE EQUIPMENT AT ISSUE IN THESE DISCUSSIONS. WE OF
COURSE INTEND SOME OF THESE RECOVERED ASSETS FOR THE RTG.

6. SPECIFIC DISPOSITION LISTS SHOWING ITEM, QUANTITIES,
AND INTENDED RECIPIENTS WILL FOLLOW SEPTEL.

7. DEPARTMENT PLANS NO REPEAT NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF
THIS DECISION. KISSINGER

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